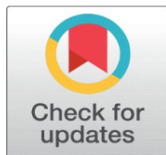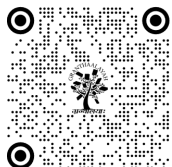# UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL ASSORTMENT: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field, concerned with the roles of social institution in the shapings of culture and is interested in the profess by which power relations organize cultural artefacts. It looks at the popular culture and is interested in every day life components such as food, habits, music, sports events, cinema etc., which have been dismissed as underlings and unworthy of academic studies. It influences the social relationships, bestows the meanings and values of artifacts of culture. In India, after economic liberalization, consumption has been seen as the marker of identity. Hence commodities are identities of lifestyle and consumption begin after the actual act of shopping. Culture amounts to the life ways of the socially connected group of people sharing a common view of the world. So culture includes language, ideas, norms, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, and basically culture is a combination of how people think, act and what they own. The objective of this study is to integrate the different levels of culture by explicitly recognizing the features and types of culture, examining their similarities and differences. Understanding a wider array of forms of culture might promote new views about what culture is and by studying cultural influences, one can understand the domains of culture more broadly. This paper is a conceptual study and therefore extends the current understanding of not only examining multiple levels of culture but also specifying conditions under which certain levels of culture dominate. Such an approach informs the researchers and practitioners about the generalizability or universality of theories and techniques across national, organizational, and professional borders.

**Keywords:** Cultural Dynamics, Cultural Relativism, Multiculturalism, Disneyfication

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Jeremy Gilbert (2019:6) describes cultural studies as 'the analysis of convergent and divergent tendencies shaping the totality of power relations within a given social field during a particular period of time'. This is an apt description which underscores the openness of cultural studies to any new issues on the horizon and according to Fiske (2002, 85) "culture is a socially transmitted or socially constructed constellation consisting of such things as practices, competencies, ideas, schemas, symbols, values, norms, institutions, goals, constitutive rules, artifacts and modifications of the physical environment". Society and culture are two different entities. Society is a group of people occupying a particular territory and culture is

a learned set of beliefs or the acceptable behaviour in the society. Lumsden (1989, 15) defined culture as "a system of socially learnable knowledge shared among members of a society". Hence certain cultural norms have to be followed to be acceptable in the society.

There are many definitions of culture and almost all researchers see certain aspects as characteristics of culture. First, culture emerges in adaptive interactions between humans and environments. Second, culture consists of shared elements. Third, culture is transmitted across time periods and generations. Cultural studies approaches four things: it has a discipline in literary criticism and has been engaged politically; rejects the distinction between high and low art or elite and popular culture; analyses not only the cultural works but also the means of production. The various tenets of culture are language, race, religion, identity, ideology, philosophy, politics and corporeality. Among the many kinds of culture that are worthy of study, I focus here on eight kinds of cultures namely sub culture, high culture, popular culture, multiculturalism, ideal culture, mall culture, media culture and mall culture. I chose these types of cultural variation for three main reasons. First they are marked by different kinds of group affliations and have cultural dynamics different from one another and reviewing these diverse types of cultural variation will hopefully show the many interesting distinctions among cultures.

## 2. SUB CULTURE

We are all part of a broader culture as well as a sub culture. For example a class consists of both Indians and Pakistanis. The people who are from India are part of a broader culture called as Indian culture and who belong to a particular religion or caste is sub culture. The lifestyle, fashion, trends, food preferred by people in a particular region becomes a part of the sub culture and also becomes a part of identity. Hence culture is an important aspect which exactly frames our identity and sub culture defines us more because only if we locate ourselves in a broad culture, we will not be able to reframe our identity in a better way. If we try to position us within different sub cultures, we try to locate our own identity in a specific way. That's called subculture which has a set of norms and rules shared by a similar group of people and it is a part of a larger culture. For example a Rajasthani person is a part of Indian culture which means Rajasthani is sub culture and Indian is broad culture.

## 3. HIGH CULTURE

It refers to members of the society who belong to the high class. Of late, the idea of high culture mingles with the Marxist idea of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. People attending royal parties, art exhibitions and people going to night clubs, priests people in authority comprise elite culture. People who belong to elite culture wear costly outfits, jewellery and always thrive to maintain their high level status in the society.

## 4. POPULAR CULTURE

It is a dominant sub culture, blooming in demand, shared by maximum people in the society. Things that everyone does or the trend that everyone follows become pop culture. To make things viral is easy through social media. So that news can be reach out to humongous people. For example, memes, Instagram, facebook, whatsapp, telegram are kinds of pop culture as they have too much demand in these days. During restoration age in England, coffee house culture became poular. There

was a fashion called coffee houses and it becomes a popular culture then. In 1960s and 1970s, Americans were fond of street fast food. In America, obesity is higher because they eat a lot of burgers than bread and still today they are following the same pattern. Americans listened to pop songs and spent time in restaurants during 1970s. That was the popular culture of that time which is still prevalent in America in the form of clubs.

## 5. MULTICULTURALISM

People from different parts of a world make their living in a country and that land becomes a melting pot. Lot of cultures mix together and that creates a cultural diversity. India is a multicultural nation and basically called as a melting pot. People from every part of the world can come to India easily as it is not much expensive to survive in India. Anyone can come and make a sort of living in India. When people from different parts of the world come to India, they also bring their cultures and values along with them. Indians imbibed the western fashion from Britishers who seem to be a dream factory. Because Indians want to be like them; want the same skin complexion; want to wear clothes like them; want to talk in their accent; want to follow the their lifestyle in India.

## 6. IDEAL CULTURE AND REAL CULTURE

What we desire to achieve. Society teaches us to abide by crime free environment. But do we live in a crime free environment everyday? There have been so many mishaps like child abuse, sexual harassment, terrorist activities happening all around the world. Ideally people are taught to be in a crimefree environment but in reality we are surviving in an aura of corruption. Ideally marriage is a lifelong commitment. But in reality, couples become fed up with each other and there is no mutual compatability exists between them. Divorces and illicit affairs are prevalent in the real world; Ideally many things which are stuffed in brain become an illusion in reality. Ideal culture is something we wish to follow and creates a dream factory. But real culture is exactly different. Ideals are preached through books, schools, elders, instructions, institutions and religious preachers. From childhood, we are taught not to cheat or lie. But no one could follow norms in reality.        Ideal culture stands for advertisements shown in TV which create a dream factory in our brain. For example, Fair & Lovely cream promises to make fairer in seven days. But nothing really happens to skin after seven days. This is a reality which is an illusion sometimes. There's also goodness in reality but not always happiness exists in the real world.

## 7. MALL CULTURE

Malls are flooded with European and American brands to entice consumer's attention. Malls are a space of display; it is a sort of spectacle that people are attracted to. These spectacles, lightings, clothes on display are attention holding and create a desire in the minds of people. Once the desire is created, they feel tempted and fall into the trap of the mall culture. The spectacle turns into a performance and people start shopping. Mall is a place where we can see all the European, English, American and Indian brands share space with each other. This concept is called 'Eclecticism' which means so many brands sell under one roof. The process of eclecticism is established to give a cosmopolitan experience.

## 8. MEDIA CULTURE

With advancements in technology, views about culture have become extended through the digital technology like social media. People who are a part of social media platform like facebook, Instagram, twitter and snapchat stick to media culture. There is a digital divide between older generation and new generation. Our grandparents are not aware of media culture and they do not understand the terminology of social media. Today's generation take a picture before eating food and post it on the social media with a caption. Through web series, hyper real world is shown on the media. The dames shown there are so fit, dazzling and everything seems to be splendiferous. People wish for lavish things which hyper real world create in front of them. Media culture tries to create this Disneyfication.

## 9. OBSERVATION

The elements of culture can be judged in terms of their relationship to the culture as a whole - a doctrine known as cultural relativism which led to the conclusion that the cultures themselves could not be evaluated or graded as higher and lower, superior or inferior. If it was unwarranted to say that patriliny was superior or inferior to matriliny; if it was unjustified or meaningless to say that monogamy was better or worse than polygamy, then it was pointless to say that one culture was higher or superior to another. A large number of anthropologists argued that such judgments were subjective and therefore unscientific. Cultures have ponderable values as well as imponderable ones, and the imponderable ones can be measured with objective, meaningful yardsticks. A culture is a means to an end: the security and continuity of life. Some kinds of culture are better means of making life secure than others. Agriculture is a better means of providing food than hunting and gathering. The productivity of human labor has been increased by machinery and by the utilization of the energy of nonhuman animals, water and wind power, and fossil fuels. Some cultures have more effective means of coping with disease than others and there are many other ways in which meaningful differences can be measured and evaluations made. Thus, the proposition that cultures have ponderable values that can be measured meaningfully by objective yardsticks and arranged in a series of stages, higher and lower, is substantiated.

### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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